Burton House steeped in tradition

By Gordon Haif

Over the years interesting traditions and hacks have sprung up in the dormitories. This is the first in a series of three articles which will examine past happenings in Burton, Baker, and East Campus.

The atmosphere of the old Burton, the long corridors, the bare pipes, the odor of smokeless beer blasts climbing out of the old carpets seemed to give the floors a certain unity which is not often, found in the newer dorms. This unity inspired a variety of traditions and hacks which are still remembered even six years after the dormitory’s renovation.

During the 1973-74 academic year, the old brick was gutted and rebuilt. The newly completed MacGregor House was filled up with Baroques at a lottery in which the names were picked out of a hat by two naked girls. Those moving into the new building were mostly those who preferred its more comfortable rooms and felt little allegiance to their old floors. As an alternative, some floors stuck together in Burton-in-exile (B-I-E) either in Hamilton House, an apartment building on Commonwealth Ave., or in an apartment in Medford.

In Hamilton House, one tradition was either started or reinvented, no one seems to know which was the case. It has not been practiced since the renovation, although it is still threatened to particlularly obnoxious people. It was the cement tradition, no one seems to know anything about the first time a cement bag was brought into a dormitory. The cement was either started or reinvented in Hamilton House. The president, Fred Burton was in Medford, and was the ranking Burton House officer in Hamilton and was ponded for being elected to that position. Later on in the year, he used his power to borrow a house cat to pick up a girl at Wellesley. When the cat was penned into his room with “this gorgeous Wellesley girl” as he described her, a vacuum was rigged up in reverse to blow computer chips under his door. He was finally released and given his just reward.

Another person in Hamilton House, Chuck Coplick, was also ponded twice, albeit on the same night. The second time he was smeared with a disgusting combination of peanut butter and computer chips and clothed in just a towel to guide his date back to her dorm, much to the amusement of all Wellesley women in the vicinity.

Probably the best known tradition to come out of Burton House was established the year before Burton-in-exile. Joel Gotthilf, ‘89 and Jerry “Moose” McComb ‘71 decided to have a 21st birthday party and went around asking Burton Third Bombers (who became originated from the acronym B-3 as in “be the bag”) for private contributions. Following years, the party became known as DTYD (drink ‘till you drop). Jack Levy, who is one of the two or three people who have been present at every DTYD described the first night as “an incredible drinking orgy.” The party continued on Saturday night after a trip to Welden pond diny the day.

The next day was Easter Sunday and all the participants were ready to go home for spring break. However, by that time, a blizzard had started up, no one could get out of Boston, and they had nothing better to do than party for the next two days.

Burton Third always had a floor party on Patriots day, so the next year, in Hamilton House this time, the two parties were combined into a blast over Patriots Day which lasted from Friday night until the liquor ran out the following Thursday.

The event was continued in the new Burton House. The party, which by now had acquired its first name, DTYD featured a $1,000 budget, rather considerable at the time. Fireworks on Briggs Field, and a champagne party in addition to the other party and the beer blast. It continued into the present day (last year was DTYD VIII) and is still held on the Patriots Day weekend, and the bodies still line the halls after the beer blast.

There are enough other hacks and traditions both in the old and the new Burton to write a book. Freshmen shower night, although certainly not exclusive to a Burton House development, has spawned some rather interesting happenings there. The Freshmen Agility Tests, and the Registration Day Beer Blasts are just a couple of the other events which have come out of the place over the years.

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